

Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support Monthly Bulletin FEBRUARY 2011 ABE/LINK

MTPDS Welcomes District Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators

The low level of performance in early grade literacy and numeracy is a matter of national concern. MTPDS is working with MoEST to address this problem. We are finalizing the design of an innovative and cost-effective intervention to be piloted in Salima and Ntchisi Districts. It will blend best practice from previous Malawian projects with international experience. To implement this intervention, MTPDS welcomed two new staff members in February, who will serve as District Literacy and Numeracy Coordinators (DLNCs). Gerald Mtaja will work in Ntchisi and Martha Myava in Salima. Both will be stationed within the district education office and work as members of the district education team.



DLNCs Gerald Mtaja, for Ntchisi and Martha Myava for Salima welcomed by their respective DEOs and CPEAs

Martha and Gerald both have many years of experience in primary education. Martha has worked as zonal coordinator for PSSP, DEO for Machinga, PEA, and Gerald has worked as Tikwere Divisional Outreach Coordinator, District Project Coordinator for School Sanitation and Hygiene Education project and as a PEA. They will work closely with PEAS to provide training and coaching to teachers in early grade literacy and numeracy teaching techniques. They will also engage the SMCs and PTAs in monitoring students' progress using school report cards. On 24th February the Chief of Party and EGRA Manager travelled to both districts to introduce the DLNCs to their respective DEOs (Mr Gabriel Chamdimba of Salima and Mr Anderson Ntandika of Ntchisi) together with their Coordinating PEAs. The DEMs welcomed the DLNCs wholeheartedly and offered their full support for the program.

CPD Update

February was a month of intense activity in the CPD program. On 2nd February the Deputy Director of DIAS chaired a meeting of officials from DIAS, DTED and MTPDS to finalize the CPD model to be implemented with support from MTPDS. The Senior Teacher Training Advisor Absalom Phiri presented various possible models of delivery which were analyzed from the perspective of effectiveness, cost and sustainability. After lengthy deliberation the house unanimously decided to implement a model with the following features:

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- Wherever possible CPD training will be delivered in the form of 2-day courses that will take place on consecutive days during school holidays in order to minimize disruption to school time.
- Training will take place using a flattened cascade model in which master trainers train PEAs who in turn deliver directly to teachers at cluster level.
- Training will be delivered by PEAs and key teachers at cluster level in order to minimize expenditure on travel reimbursements and promote sustainability.
- All training will emphasize the importance of leadership at school level organizing a complementary program of school-based CPD which is responsive to individual teachers' needs.
- Training will be actively monitored by MoEST and MTPDS officials in order to assure quality and accountability for service delivery.
- MoEST will support MTPDS to ensure that District Education Offices provide timely reconciliation of CPD funds provided.

CPD delivery was ongoing throughout February. By the end of the month all districts nationwide had completed the delivery of the first literacy module. Exact attendance numbers have not yet been finalized though estimates of attendance rates are in the range of 80-90%. This is very encouraging given that training took place during weekends.



The most significant challenge encountered so far has been the timely return of reconciled accounts by districts. MTPDS appeals to all districts to expedite this process, as ongoing funding of districts for CPD is dependant upon the reconciliation of all outstanding advances.

MTPDS will work with MoEST to assure quality through regular monitoring of CPD. Feedback obtained during monitoring will inform future training programs and sharpen practice. A meeting of representatives of DTED, DIAS and MIE was held at M'manga TDC in Liwonde to develop and finalize agreed tools to be used by officials for this purpose.

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MoEST Departments Meet to Clarify their Roles and Responsibilities

On 22nd February 2011, MTPDS facilitated a meeting of departments and institutions involved in the education, development and management of primary school teachers. The meeting was part of the process of assisting the ministry to clarify and harmonize their roles and responsibilities. The meeting was attended by representatives from: Teacher Education and Development (DTED), Department of Inspection and Advisory Services (DIAS), Departments of Basic Education (DBE), Higher Education (DHE), and Administration. There were also representatives from Domasi College of Education (DCE), Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) and Malawi Examination Board (MANEB).

The meeting was chaired by the Principal Secretary responsible for Basic and Secondary Education, Dr. Simeon Hau. In his opening remarks Dr. Hau explained that the need to have the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry's departments and institutions clarified and harmonized was identified as early as 2007 with the beginning of the implementation of the Primary Curriculum and Assessment Reform (PCAR). At that time the ministry set a task force to initiate the process. The task force produced a discussion paper but unfortunately the paper was not acted upon by the ministry's management. Recently, the need for the clarification of the roles and responsibilities has increased in light of:

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- The need to implement the recommendations of the 2005 Functional Review of the Ministry.
- The decentralization of some of the functions of MoEST especially at the primary education level.
- The implementation of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for primary school teachers.

Therefore, in October 2010 the Ministry asked the DIAS to work with MTPDS and revive the process. The department, in collaboration with MIE and DTED and with technical assistance from MTPDS revised and updated the original discussion paper to make it address current concerns. Dr. Hau informed the meeting that discussions would be guided by this document.

Participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss the roles and functions of the various departments and institutions. In general they agreed with the paper's interpretation of the roles and responsibilities but recommended that there should be more clarification on the linkages between the various departments and institutions. However, they also expressed regret that the process had not been initiated before the Ministry's functional review report was approved. They said that in the functional review report, some departments were given functions that in practice belong to other departments. They thanked MTPDS for facilitating the revival of the process, but also expressed the wish to have the process include all departments and institutions and not just those that are involved with primary teachers. MTPDS will now work with DIAS, DTED and MIE to incorporate the observations of the participants so that it can submit to Ministry for the consideration its recommendations.

Literacy Intervention Materials Developed at MIE

From 28th February to 11th March 2011 MTPDS has gathered together literacy experts from MIE, Centre for Education, Research and Training, Centre for Language Studies, Teacher Training Colleges, Domasi College, DTED and DIAS at a writers' workshop in Zomba. This task team is developing a strategy and literacy instructional materials for teachers and learners in grades 1-4 in Salima and Ntchisi districts. The intervention will address the weaknesses in learner performance that were revealed in the MTPDS Early



Selecting Material for use in the Intervention.

Grade Reading Assessment baseline survey that was conducted in 98 schools across the country in November 2010 - targeting learners in grades 2 and 4. The results are cause for grave concern and will be summarized at length in the March MTPDS bulletin once the report has been finalized. The results suggest that teacher require highly structured support and guidance in the teaching of early literacy skills. The materials will therefore include scripted lesson plans and stories for learners. The experiences derived from this intervention will feed into the current CPD programme for the benefit of all teachers across the country.

Research on Primary Textbook Review Begins

The review of textbooks and teachers guides for the new primary curriculum is now long overdue. From 22nd to 25th February, 2011, MTPDS team composed of the six Division Teacher Training Coordinators (DTTCs), The Teacher Training Coordinator, The Primary Curriculum Specialist and the Division Team Leader attended a workshop at MIE which was organized by their Research Department. The main purpose of the workshop was to draft Instruments for use in the review of Standards 1 to 4 textbooks.

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MTPDS will provide both financial and technical assistance to the process which is being lead by MIE. The workshop took place at MIE campus in Domasi. The Acting Deputy Director of MIE Mr. Mhlanga opened the meeting on behalf of the Director. In his opening remarks he encouraged the researchers to attach priority to the activity as it would enable teachers nationwide to contribute to the design of the textbooks that they will use.



Mr. Mhlanga opening the textbook review workshop



Teachers in a focus group discussion

Three instruments were developed: (i) a focus group discussion guide to solicit general feedback on the quality of existing textbooks and teachers' guides and suggestions for their improvement (ii) a teacher questionnaire to capture specific information on the syllabus, and teachers guide and the learner's book, (ii) a questionnaire reviewing of Standard 1 posters and.

Each instrument was then pre-tested. On 23rd February, the instruments were pretested in five TDCs. Mponda and Likangala TDCs represented urban setting whereas Songani Mchengawadi and Machinga represented rural setting. On 24th February, 2011, the instruments were amended according to the experiences the teams had during the pretesting exercise. It was agreed that 6 teams from MIE would collect data in each division using the revised instrument from 28th February 2011 to 5th March, 2011. The MIE Director, Dr. W. Susuwele-Banda thanked MTPDS for the technical and financial support and he officially closed the workshop. MIE will then prepare a report by 15th April, 2011, which will be presented to stakeholder's before the review of materials begins in earnest.

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MANEB Produces Report on Continuous Assessment Guidelines

Teachers nationwide continue to struggle to implement continuous assessment, which is an important feature of the New Primary Curriculum. In our January bulletin, we reported that MANEB, with support from MTPDS, was collecting data so that the MoEST could make an informed decision regarding the review of Continuous Assessment Guidelines. MANEB has now finalized the report with input from MTPDS. Plans are underway to schedule a date for presenting the report stakeholders. MTPDS will continue providing technical support until the task of finalizing new guidelines is complete.